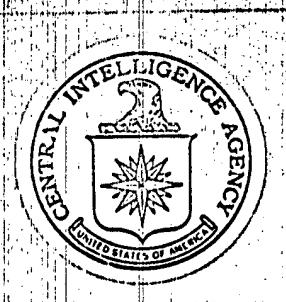


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EUROPE

France Renews Commitment to Space Programs

The French National Space Studies Center (CNES) announced last week that it had received a budget of \$133 million for space programs during 1971. This is the second largest budget CNES has ever received and, after two years of declining budgets, reflects a renewed commitment by the government to French space efforts.

The budget had risen steadily from \$3.4 million in 1961, to a high of some \$140 million in 1968, then declined for two years because of national economic strain and a re-evaluation of some space activities. The 1971 budget allocates \$84 million to program investments and \$49 million to R&D and operating expenditures.

The program investment sector includes \$36 million for the European multinational space organizations, suggesting a strong French commitment to the development of the Europa space boosters and applications satellites. France maintains that these programs are essential to serious European participation in space exploration and applications. In actuality, the programs probably do more to further France's own independent space efforts, already more advanced and comprehensive than those of all other European countries combined.

In addition to the European programs, \$30 million will be spent on bilateral projects related to the development of the French-inspired Symphonie communications satellite system and studies for upgrading the Diamant-B space booster, presently the basic workhorse of the French space program. Even if its capabilities were improved through such a joint project, the new missile still would remain a French space booster and, as with the Diamant-B, France prob-

ably would offer to make it available on a fee basis for use by the European scientific community.

Included in the money for bilateral cooperation is \$10 million for various Franco-American space experiments, but only about \$1 million for joint studies of space with the USSR. The Franco-Soviet studies will center on the launching of another French solar cell package by a Soviet launcher. Last year's joint efforts were highlighted by the landing on the moon of a Soviet scientific package containing French laser reflectors.

The French space budget also includes some \$18 million for programs the French will conduct themselves, such as sounding rocket launchings, stratospheric balloon projects, and laser experiments. Most of this sum, however, will be spent on developing and launching three satellites this year from France's new space center in French Guiana.

Paris took an early and continuing lead among European countries in supporting space programs. France's expenditures on space activities in recent years have amounted to more than one third of the total for Western Europe as a whole, and this proportion is increasing. France also is the only West European country consistently to spend more on national and bilateral space projects than it contributes to Europe's multinational programs. France views its space activities as having provided invaluable inputs to a whole range of scientific, aerospace, and military programs, as well as having contributed to placing France in the forefront of the European scientific community.

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